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RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0876
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUEHIHL/REO HILLAH 1054

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 HILLAH 000157

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/16/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [EAID](#)
SUBJECT: KARBALA ENGINEERS MEETING; IP CHIEF GRUMBLES ABOUT MOI
SUPPORT

HILLAH 00000157 001.2 OF 002

CLASSIFIED BY: Angus T. Simmons, Provincial Team Leader, PRT
Najaf, DOS.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. PRT Karbala met with Karbala PC Chair and key PC members to continue discussion of cooperation between USACE (Corps of Engineers) and Karbala Provincial Engineers on Projects. PRT urged Karbala PRDC to work expeditiously to complete ESF project packages. IP Chief BG Ra'ad expressed some of his concerns to PRTOffs about MOI support before the meeting. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (S) BG Ra'ad started the conversation by saying Karbala was now under the rule of law and the situation was much better than in the past. He complained that he was facing a lot of pressure from the MOI (Ministry of Interior) and that if the pressure continues he will quit his job. BG Ra'ad said the MOI was not cooperating with him and his group in securing Karbala province and that he believed the MOI was furthering the JAM agenda. BG Ra'ad added that without MOI support Karbala will go back to a "Zero Point" in its security situation. He cited the recent (Nov 09, 2007) MOI team that arrived to investigate the Shabania incident but spent much of its time investigating allegations of police abuses and attending funerals of JAM militia as an example of interference with his duties. He further stated his belief that the MOI minister wanted to pursue his agenda for Karbala by pressuring him and his commanders. BG Ra'ad at this point excused himself, saying he was needed in a different venue.

¶3. Comment: Anger over the slow pace of MOI support in equipping the IP is nothing new from Ra'ad, but his tone is increasingly strident. BG Ra'ad now believes the MOI has aligned itself with the JAM and various other militias and is trying to circumvent his authority, making it much more difficult for him to perform his job. It should be noted that while security in Karbala is far from perfect, BG Ra'ad and elements of the IP have drastically improved the situation on the ground. As an example, our USACE team has finally been able to inspect construction sites, a visit that just a few short months ago would have been impossible. The improving security situation on the ground has further exacerbated the level of tension within the IP and between the various militias and their supporters.

Provincial Council Meeting

¶4. (SBU) Although we planned to meet with the council for two hours, by the time the PC finished their previous engagements we

were left with about an hour to cover a large array of issues. After brief introductions by Karbala TL, LTC McMahan (USACE) started the technical discussions on a positive note by stating that he had been able to travel (for the first time in a very long time) to two of the four construction sites on the PPL. LTC McMahan affirmed how much the security situation has improved and how such a visit would not have been possible two months earlier. LTC McMahan thanked the council and Dr. Rasoul for helping resolve several obstacles to the completion of the electrical network project, and USACE confirmed that it is now close to being finished. The PC reiterated that Dr. Rasoul will be our POC for any future obstacles encountered on any projects.

15. (SBU) PC Sheik Falah Construction Committee Chair inquired about one project where two of sixty transformer kiosks at a site had been damaged before construction began, although they were still functional. LTC McMahan confirmed that they had not been in the scope of work for the project, but assured Sheik Falah that the project would function at full capacity, even if the two transformers lost capacity. LTC McMahan noted that the project still had not received any letter of acceptance. Sheik Falah commented that it would be signed, albeit with reservations, as the Provincial Council did not expect Turkish transformers to be procured (the Electricity DG had wanted Japanese). LTC McMahan explained that there had been some confusion about how USACE procures equipment and that in future this would not be an issue as long as the PC provided specific equipment model numbers or equivalent descriptions.

16. (SBU) USACE discussed the status of several more projects. LTC McMahan noted that USACE was going to terminate three contracts for road projects where work had not progressed for six months. The PC was interested in knowing what punishments we would levy against the contractor. PC explained that under Iraqi law there was a mechanism for punishing contractors and they wanted to make sure we would follow through with some type of legal action to send a message to the community of contractors. Team Leader commented that we were still awaiting

HILLAH 00000157 002.2 OF 002

a list of Provincial Contractor who had been "blacklisted" for non-performance but noted that the list should not only include the name of the contractor, but the reasons why the contractor is on the list. PC agreed to make this list available to us at some point in the future. Overall the PC was pleased about the status of USACE projects.

17. (SBU) PRT noted that two of the projects on the current PPL (Provincial Projects List) did not meet current ESF funding criteria. There was some brief discussion regarding the two projects but no pushback from the PC. PRT Engineer then elaborated on the requirements to ensure a completed project package. He stated that Dr. Rasoul had sent the bills of quantities forward but nothing else. Team Leader further stated that we had already missed some key deadlines and with the next deadline of 15 December approaching it was imperative that we get some movement on these projects or their funding could be in jeopardy. Team Leader asked PC if they had any mechanism to speed the process up, i.e. a consultant who could help them prepare the packages. PC replied that they had used consultants for some projects in the past for IRG projects but not for ESF funded projects. TL told PC we would be happy to meet with them or anyone working on these projects to explain our requirements in more detail as necessary. PC said that Dr. Rasoul will follow up with these ESF issues.

18. (SBU) COMMENT: The overall atmosphere of the meeting was more cordial than the first round of engineer discussions and we managed to cover our agenda. Each side has some issues that will require follow up in the coming weeks. We will continue to engage to ensure that the ESF projects are submitted in a timely manner. However, it appears that a number of misunderstandings that arose during a period when it was difficult to interact have been resolved and we are waiting for the PRDC to present us with complete project packages for the next round of ESF funding. END COMMENT.

